



ERO Early Childhood Akatea | Governing Organisation Evaluation Report

Governing Organisation Name: Taranaki Free Kindergarten Association Incorporated

Head Office Location: New Plymouth

1 ERO's judgement of Taranaki Free Kindergarten Association Incorporated:

Indicator	Below the threshold for quality		Above the threshold for quality	
Organisational conditions	Improvement required	Working towards	Embedded	Excelling
Learning conditions	Improvement required	Working towards	Embedded	Excelling

For an explanation of the judgement terms used and of the evaluation process please refer to the last page of this report. These judgements are based on the evidence provided to ERO during the evaluation process.

Children's health and safety	Improvement required	Taking reasonable steps
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2 ERO's Judgements

A [Governing Organisation Evaluation](#) evaluates the extent to which organisational and learning conditions support equitable and excellent outcomes for all learners. [Te Ara Poutama Indicators of quality for early childhood education: what matters most](#) is the basis for making judgements about its effectiveness. The [Early Childhood Education \(ECE\) - Improvement Framework \(teacher led services\)](#) derived from the indicators, is used to inform the ERO's judgements about the organisation's performance. Evaluation for improvement | Ngā Aronga Whai Hua is integrated across all of the above areas.

3 About the Organisation

Taranaki Free Kindergarten Association Incorporated (the association), trading as Kindergarten Taranaki, is a regional organisation comprised of 24 centre-based services. At the time of this evaluation all 24 kindergartens were on a full licence.

A governing board of parent representatives works with senior management to enact the recently developed Te Rautaki o Te Pūtahi Kura Pūhou o Taranaki – Kindergarten Taranaki Strategy. Changes to the board continue as part of its regular election processes.

The chief executive has overall responsibility for operational support and pedagogical leadership. They work in partnership with the teaching and learning team and senior leadership team to provide guidance and professional learning to grow the capability of teachers.

Since the last review, a teaching and learning team leadership role has been established as a fixed term appointment. The previous Pou Ārahi (cultural advisor) position is vacant. Kindergarten Taranaki intends to make an appointment upon completion of their strategic 'roadmap' to becoming a Tiriti based organisation. Two senior teachers who whakapapa Māori have oversight and support teachers to build their capability to respond effectively to tamariki and whānau Māori. Changes to financial leadership have led to external support being sought to strengthen financial and asset management.

Findings from ERO's June 2023 evaluation at the governance and organisational level identified that there was significant development required in implementing quality improvement systems, processes, and practices.

4 Organisation Progress

There has been good progress in addressing the improvement actions identified in the 2023 ERO report.

Three improvement actions were identified. These included:

- developing and implementing systems and processes to enable the review and monitoring of licensing requirements, including building capability and assurance reporting to the board
- developing a governance framework to better support overall sustainability and capability
- establishing a performance management process for senior leaders.

Some progress has been made in relation to the review and monitoring of licensing requirements. In the 18 months following ERO's 2023 evaluation, the association worked extensively with the Ministry of Education after provisional licences were issued to three kindergartens. This work has built leadership knowledge and understanding of requirements and strengthened some policies and procedures. The association has identified that further work is required to clarify procedures in relation to sleep records, administration of medications and the analysis of incident and accident records.

He Matapihi Whakamārama, the association's compliance audit tool, has been refined and implemented association wide. It does not cover all aspects of licensing requirements. An audit of each kindergarten is undertaken annually with a summary report generated. Senior teachers monitor kindergartens' progress in addressing any identified areas of concern primarily regarding curriculum requirements.

Current reporting to the board includes progress towards reinstatement of full licences and reporting to external agencies. The board is not yet assured that all licensing requirements are maintained across all kindergartens.

Good progress has been made in relation to the development of a governance framework to better support overall sustainability and capability. The board, in consultation with staff, families and whānau, has reviewed the mission, vision, and strategic priorities leading to a recently established strategic purpose and objectives.

Clearly defined board roles and responsibilities, a comprehensive induction manual and recently agreed training schedule have been developed, with plans to implement these following the board election process in November 2024.

Good progress has been made towards establishing a useful performance management process for senior leaders. A procedure and process, along with comprehensive job descriptions that include useful key performance measures, were developed in September 2024. These enable a shared understanding of expectations and provide a solid framework for regular monitoring and feedback on progress towards agreed goals. With a full cycle yet to be completed, its effectiveness is unknown.

The chief executive's new performance development process, which includes external and internal assessment against key performance measures, has recently been completed. Improved timeliness and clarity in feedback is needed to strengthen the usefulness of the process.

5 Evaluation findings for December 2024

Kindergarten Taranaki used a variety of information to develop its new strategic priorities that include a focus on aspects of children's learning and wellbeing. The current strategic objectives include:

- Te whakapakari i te Mātau ā-Ahurea | Strengthening cultural capabilities
- Te whakapiki i te manawaroa puta noa i ngā mahi katoa | Building resilience across all functions
- Te whanake i te toronga me ngā arawātea | Improving access and opportunities
- Te whanake i ngā hononga kounga | Improving quality relationships.

The association has also made a strategic commitment to becoming a te Tiriti o Waitangi based organisation by 2033. At the time of this evaluation the association's values were under review.

Systematic processes for planning, monitoring, and reporting to the board on progress towards the achievement of some strategic objectives are in place. Plans to report on other strategic priorities are scheduled for 2025.

Hāpaitia te Mana, the association's curriculum expectations, have been developed and aspects implemented association wide. Leaders have merged this guidance with He Matapihi Whakamārama. However, the processes for monitoring curriculum do not sufficiently provide a clear picture of quality.

Leaders coordinate internal and external professional learning and development, relevant to the overarching priorities of kindergarten communities, that is building aspects of teacher capability.

6 Leadership to support quality education and care for children

Four senior teachers are allocated responsibility for individual kindergartens and work collectively to support curriculum and pedagogical development. They provide targeted support and guidance to build professional practice through regular visits and an established performance management process.

Senior teachers have a sound knowledge of each kindergarten's strengths, however systems, processes and practices for monitoring and reporting of curriculum expectations (Hāpaitia te Mana) and quality teaching and learning require improvement.

- High levels of relational trust between head and senior teachers promote a culture of collaboration, debate, problem-solving and reflection with a focus on improvement.
- Leaders have undertaken an evaluation that has been helpful in building teacher capability in relation to assessment for learning practices.
- There is a need to ensure curriculum oversight remains in place when personnel issues are ongoing, to identify and address curriculum expectation gaps in a timely manner.

7 Summary of findings from visits to sample services

ERO visited a sample of 16 kindergartens to verify what Taranaki Free Kindergarten Association Incorporated knows about the quality of each kindergarten's learning conditions and to what extent the organisational conditions support kindergarten improvement. ERO selected the service sample in consultation with the governing organisation.

Most teachers implement a range of effective teaching strategies to support learners and their learning. These include social noticing, empowering children to problem solve, commenting and questioning, and praise and encouragement.

- Tū Kaha, Tū Māia, the association's Mana Model of Assessment for Māori Learners, and senior teacher guidance is increasing teachers' consideration of the cultural heritage of Māori learners, in most of the 12 kindergartens that are implementing the model.
- Teachers work well to role model and reinforce behaviours that build the social competence and emotional resilience of children.
- Teachers work collaboratively with whānau and external experts to support children with diverse needs to be active participants in the curriculum.
- Inclusive learning environments enable learners, particularly those up to the age of three, to be well supported to be active learners building their independence.
- There is a variation in the knowledge and implementation of culturally responsive practices for children of Pacific heritages. The curriculum in most kindergartens is yet to reflect Pacific values and knowledge.

Teaching teams have made progress in aligning children's learning priorities to *Te Whāriki*, the early childhood curriculum. Teachers have been supported to improve the quality of assessment for learning with a focus on children's progress. Further refinement, including evaluation of teaching strategies, is required.

The association is working towards improving the organisational conditions that enable teaching teams to purposefully do and use evaluation for improvement.

- A process of review is well established and focuses on what teachers and children are doing rather than evaluating how well practices are supporting children's learning.
- A useful framework and targeted professional learning are building shared understanding and confidence to do and use evaluation for improvement.
- Leaders need to be more focused on using evaluation for improvement to determine what is working well and for whom or what is not and why.

8 Where to next for improvement?

Prior to the next ERO evaluation Taranaki Free Kindergarten Association Incorporated will progress the following actions through its quality improvement planning.

- Develop and implement a system that reliably determines levels of curriculum quality, report this data to the board and use it to inform decision making.
- Continue to build evaluation leadership and teacher capability, with a focus on the quality of evaluation practice and an increased focus on evaluating impact in relation to desired outcomes for children's learning.
- Develop a culturally responsive curriculum and teaching practices for learners of Pacific heritages.

9 Management Assurance on Legal Requirements

As part of this review, a representative of Taranaki Free Kindergarten Association Incorporated completed an *ERO Governing Organisation Assurance Statement and Self-Audit Checklist*. In these documents they stated that the organisation has the systems, processes, and practices to be assured that service providers for licensed services within the organisation are meeting legal requirements related to:

- curriculum
- premises and facilities
- health and safety practices
- governance, management, and administration.

The licensed service provider/s of the sampled services listed at the end of this report also completed an *ERO Assurance Statement and Self-Audit Checklist* for their service. In these documents they attested that they have taken all reasonable steps to meet legal requirements, including those detailed in Ministry of Education Circulars and other documents, related to these areas.

All early childhood services are required to promote children's health and safety and to regularly review their compliance with legal requirements.

10 Next ERO Review

The next ERO evaluation is likely to be in 2 years.

Lisa Oldridge

Lisa Oldridge
Director of Early Childhood Education (Acting)

17 March 2025

[*Further information about how ERO evaluates Akatea | Governing Organisations is available here.*](#)

11 About the Governing Organisation

Service types	Kindergarten	
Total number of licensed services	24	
Total number of children licensed for across all services	953	
Total number of children enrolled across all services	1109	
Ethnic composition <i>Using rounded percentages</i>	Māori 33%, NZ European/Pākehā 45%, Indian 5%, Asian 6%, other European 6%, Pacific 3%, other ethnic groups 3%	
Number of full-time equivalent teachers	Qualified	110
	Unqualified	0
Review team on site	September/December 2024	
Date of this report	17 March 2025	
Most recent ERO report(s) These are available at www.ero.govt.nz	Akatea Governing Organisation evaluation, June 2023.	

12 List of sampled services

All sampled services are on a full licence.

Services sampled in this evaluation included:

Profile Number	Name of service	Service Type
5230	Avon Kindergarten	Free Kindergarten
5216	Bell Block Pohutukawa Kindergarten	Free Kindergarten
5217	Brooklands Kindergarten	Free Kindergarten
5218	Devon Kindergarten	Free Kindergarten
5219	Fitzroy Kindergarten	Free Kindergarten
5221	Inglewood Kindergarten	Free Kindergarten
5636	Kaitake Kindergarten	Free Kindergarten
5233	Koromiko Kindergarten	Free Kindergarten
5222	Marfell Kindergarten	Free Kindergarten
5223	Merrilands Kindergarten	Free Kindergarten
5226	Ngamotu Kindergarten	Free Kindergarten
5234	Patea Kindergarten	Free Kindergarten
5235	Stratford Central Kindergarten	Free Kindergarten
5236	Tawhiti Kindergarten	Free Kindergarten
5227	Waitara Central Kindergarten	Free Kindergarten
5229	Westown Kindergarten	Free Kindergarten

Activities undertaken by the evaluation team

- Pre-visit contact with the service provider/organisation leader(s).
- Meetings and / or conversations with governance, management and leaders.
- Verification and validation of what the organisation knows about the quality of education and care in its services.
- Reading documentation.
- Sampling of information related to compliance.

Activities undertaken by the evaluation team in the service sample visits

- Pre-visit contact with the service leader.
- Meetings and / or conversations with leaders and teachers.
- Verification and validation of information shared by the organisation at service level.
- Reading documentation as service level.
- Scanning the learning environment and resources.
- Observations of interactions and teaching practice while onsite in the sample services.
- Sampling of information related to compliance.

Description around ERO's judgement terms

ERO's judgements are based on *Te Ara Poutama* and the *Early Childhood Education Improvement Framework (teacher led services)*.

	Above the threshold for quality
Excelling	The organisation is excelling in the learning and organisational conditions to support high quality education and care for children.
Embedded	The organisation has embedded its learning and organisational conditions to support ongoing improvement in the provision of quality education and care for children.
	Below the threshold for quality
Working towards	The organisation is working towards establishing the learning and organisational conditions to support improvements in the provision of quality education and care for children.
Improvement required	The organisation has not yet developed the learning and organisational conditions to support the provision of quality education and care for children.